

July 6, 2023



The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
United States Senate
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Sarbanes
U.S. House of Representatives
2370 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: *Chesapeake National Recreation Area*

Dear Senator Van Hollen and Representative Sarbanes:

On behalf of Hispanic Access Foundation, I am writing to thank you for your leadership to create the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA), a new unit of the National Park System in the Chesapeake watershed. Hispanic Access Foundation is a national 501c3 nonprofit with a long history of working with the Latino community in California. Our mission is to elevate Latino voices, connect Latinos with opportunities, and improve lives for a more equitable society.

This bill is essential to closing the Nature Gap -- the lack of parks, nature and green space within communities of color and low-income communities. Throughout the Chesapeake watershed, communities of color are more than three times as likely to live in a nature-deprived area than white communities. The Nature Gap has left a legacy of poorer health, higher stress levels, worse educational outcomes, lack of recreation and business opportunities and greater vulnerability to extreme heat and flooding in these nature-deprived neighborhoods. Bills that protect nature close to our communities are critical for closing the Nature Gap and creating equitable access to nature's benefits, as well as honoring our region's diverse heritage.

We strongly support the establishment of this new national recreation area, and we look forward to working with you to ensure that the Chesapeake is recognized for its natural and historic significance by inclusion in the National Park System.

Those of us who live and work in this region know that the Chesapeake Bay watershed is a natural wonder fully deserving of national park status. We strongly support the goals of the new recreation area to recognize the Chesapeake's national significance, conserve and interpret these resources, expand public access, enhance tourism and local economies, engage watershed communities, promote diversity and equity, improve water quality, and advance the conservation goals of the Chesapeake Bay Program and the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network.

We endorse the acquisition of land and land-based resources via willing donation, purchase from a willing seller, and/or exchange or transfer from another Federal Agency. And we support the requirements that nothing in the Act would impact or affect commercial or recreational fishing or enlarge or diminish jurisdiction of each State, with respect to fish and wildlife management.

Establishing the CNRA will allow all stories of the watershed, its citizens, and its history to be shared with visitors from across the world. The creation of the CNRA will enhance public understanding of the Bay at participating National Park Service sites and partner sites to tell the story of the outstanding, remarkable, and nationally significant resources of the Bay watershed.

Thank you once again for leading this important initiative. We look forward to working with you on bill introduction and final passage to establish this new national recreation area in the Chesapeake.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Maite', written in a cursive style.

Maite Arce
President & CEO, Hispanic Access Foundation

Cc: The Honorable Ben Cardin
The Honorable Mark Warner
The Honorable Tim Kaine
The Honorable Bobby Scott